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the
second
creature

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the second creature

*In the morning of the world
Brahma made Man,
but being dissatisfied and
wanting to do better,
he started upon
a second creature: Woman.
For this task he took
a handful of earth and
something from the sky,
he took the wild wind and
water from a quiet stream,
he took the mango and the melon,
the pomegranate,
the grape and the fig,
he took a slender tree and
the coloured parrot that
screeched in its topmost branches,
he took something from a sparrow,
some part of a pigeon
and of a peahen,
he took the gentle heart of a lamb,
the wild deer's grace and
the tiger's temper—
these and the many other
sweet and wild things,
Brahma took and mingled
with care to make this
second creature.
And when his labour of
love was done,
Brahma sat back,
and smiled and smiled..*

THE *Second*
Creature



64 PHOTOGRAPHS BY

Sunil

Janah

FOREWORD *by* KIM CHRISTEN

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a word from the photographer

THESE PICTURES were taken during four years of almost continuous wandering throughout India. While broadly speaking, my subject was the Indian people, my emphasis had been on the distressing conditions of their lives, their poverty and wretchedness and their repeatedly manifest revolt against it.

That out of my assignments of famines, epidemics and slum conditions, I could collect so many pictures of smiling, handsome women is not however entirely strange. Even in the midst of all these a 'pretty girl' is difficult to resist. It is reassuring to find her so often. She heartens a discouraged and a poor people insidiously taught by religion and custom to turn away from all joy. I have photographed her because she represents the youth, charm and vitality which are not yet quite destroyed in such a people, and which appear as inexpressibly as the hunger I had gone to portray.

These women belong to the poorest masses of India. I have found them among coir-workers on the Malabar coast, in the aboriginal highlands and the jungles of Assam and in the mountains of Kashmir. I have found them too in our vast plains, in wheat and paddy fields and fishermen's huts and

in the squalid tenements of Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay. Anyone who has been close to them cannot but feel deeply that the poorest are the least distorted of our people. This feeling I have tried to relay and I make no apologies for representing in this volume only the women.

Our proud old civilisation systematically degrades woman. It completely denies her any freedom and it cannot be said that it encourages her charm and youth. But I did not intend these photographs to bear out the old story of the sad, sad Indian woman at all. She can be as gay as anyone would like her to be and she is bright enough, beautiful and sensual enough to inspire her men to live. I have often wanted to compile her pictures into a book.

I am grateful to all the people—they are too many to be named here—who took me to peasant homes in different parts of the country and made it possible for me to take these photographs.

foreword by Kim Christen

Ask the average man abroad: what is India? and he will say that it is the Taj Mahal, *or* that it is a bustee with a scraggy-necked vulture on the broken roof; he will say that India is a fat fellow sitting in a pair of scales balancing a pan of gold and precious stones, *or* that it is a leper at large upon a garbage pile in the hungry company of dogs and crows; he will say that India is a princess, bejewelled and most beautiful *or* that it is the brown bones of a girl in a Calcutta gutter at whose leathern breasts a babe divly sucks and sups.

India, you will be told, is a land of extremes. And how shall anyone abroad ever know otherwise while the face and the figure of this country is invariably presented in one of these two ways: painted, exotic, often debauched by wealth and excessive satisfactions, *or*, alternatively, poor beyond imagining, pitiable to the point of horror, miserable, malshapen, monstrous?

It is always one thing *or* the other. In India there is no normalcy it would seem. No middle way between fatness and famine, riches and wretchedness.

But these photographs are also of Indian people. And these people, it is claimed, more properly represent India than any rajah who ridiculously

struts beside a dead tiger or any beggar that wails upon a city pavement, for these people provide by far the greater part of the country's four hundred and more millions.

These people are materially poor, but this is not so only because they are Indians: it is also because they are peasants and labourers, and that is the way of the world it seems. Yet, in spite of being both poor and Indian, their bellies do not flap with famine and their eyes are surely bright.

So far there has been shown only the sad face of India. But deeper than the religions and the politics that twist their minds and trouble their eager hearts, people are much the same the world over: they laugh when it is time for laughter and weep when it is sorrow's season, they are sudden to anger and quick to forgive, sometimes they are seized by brutal moods, sometimes are tided over by tenderness. Deeply it is the same with the poor and unschooled the wide world over, but so far there has been shown only the one half of the Indian heart.

Here is the other. Here are happy Indians, plump and smiling and proud with life. These people's lives have their full share of sorrow, but here they are shown in their more merry moods since almost everywhere else they have been shown only miserable.

So here then are no lepers, child-wives, temple harlots, crazy loons. Here are people that are straight of limb and sound of mind. And they are Indians. Ordinary Indians who live only ordinary lives, the men amongst them waking with an early sun, working the day long in their fields and when the sun shows red on the hills, walking home to the company of friends, sitting down then to have food and drink, lying down later to know love and the sighing body and a well earned sleep at last.

It is a simple day, but it must seem to ask an extraordinary strength of the women amongst them: those who smile from these pages. The peasant woman must be the first from sleep: she must crouch over the fire and feed her family: later she must bend her back in the fields and later

return to the village, again to the smoking fire and the meal making. And when the brass pots are bright again she is free then to give her mouth to some lover in a thicket, or her breast to a child at home, or her body to a husband whose hungers are of many kinds.

To a man in a city such as I, it must seem burdensome to be an Indian peasant woman, and yet they appear to smile more readily than their urban sisters who are saved by civilized comforts from the full weight of being women.

The people in this book are all women. There are at least four reasons for this: the photographer, the publisher, the designer and the present writer. They are all men. And men like to look at women. The selection is based upon considerations that are no more—and no less—noble than that.

Of all those who are responsible for this book I am the only one with a white skin, yet I am as eager as any about it if only because it provides some evidence for those arguments I sometimes enter in defence of India as I know it and love it: a defence that is made both here and abroad against those who mean to sing India's praises.

India, such persons insist, is a spiritual land, and for love of India I strenuously deny it since I know that by 'spirit' they mean only what is bloodless and bereft of life; they mean solemn words and eyes averted from the green and scarlet earth; they say 'spirit' and show only cold, incapable, hearts; they say 'purity' and show only poverty of impulse.

So I am always eager to assure such persons of India's sensual life. But they are unbelieving and when I speak of the body of India they murmur: *Maya*.

I am not one to know of such things, but if the body is an illusion, it is a sweet illusion surely. And if I am still an infant in my understanding of such things, I cannot yet be persuaded against the body any more than a child can be persuaded against the pleasure it finds in the shadow

that dances on its cradle, or than a lunatic can be persuaded against the dream that sends him dancing down the grey streets, or than a lover can be persuaded against the feeling that lets him find in the prose of some plain girl's presence, rainbows and leaping fish, the softness of doves, all the flowers and fruits of summer.

The body is a sweet illusion I say, and I would wish to be left with my infant ignorance, my mad dance, my blind love if the ending of the illusion is to leave me mean and miserable as these wise men seem to be.

What is wisdom when foolishness means flowers in the hand?

So I am glad of this book because it shows that India has a body too, and that this country whose sun first saw me is not inhabited by only sunless persons: those who bruise their bodies with idealism and those who love a word more than a world and argue through the day and the night without ever knowing that the sun is warm upon the shoulders or that the sky is ever pricked by stars.

India is already too well known for its mental and physical emaciations. It warms me to see that these women of India are lovely flesh and lively blood.

A bit too flesh and blood for some it seems, for I am told that there are some who will blush at the breast of a girl such as is shown here. It is hard to realize, but I am assured that it is so. The photographer himself has been accused of uncovering the charms of the coastal girl shown here, and I know of an anthropological work that brought letters of abuse and accusation to its author because the persons under study belonged to a tribe that saw no need to put a cloth between the bright sun and the breasts of their women.

Such 'pure' protests accompany pornography. Behind the back of every solemn prude and puritan is a sly man selling 'filthy pictures'. It is the 'purity' of such persons that makes pornography so gainful a trade. The same fear of life that inspires these protests, inspires those impotents who

do not dare to have the whore they hunger after and who therefore seek a safer satisfaction in the naked pages of a 'Naturist' magazine or a collection of 'Art Studies'.

Surely dishonesty is the only indecency.

These pictures are not 'art studies': these people are not 'naturists'. Wherever unclothed, they are so by natural habit, they have not taken off their clothes for any base or ideal end. And if there is here—as there seems in some instances—any evidence of conscious posturing, it is a different sort of display to that indulged by those photographer's models who offer their doll-like bodies as examples of the 'female form divine'.

The girl from Malabar shown here is not posing for an artist: it is for a man that she twists and smiles and turns and wordlessly says: Am I not beautiful?

It is not art, but more nearly related to that motive which opens the champa flower and lights the scarlet torches of the coral tree: that causes coloured fish to chase each other round the Cape of Comorin, and goats to leap gay upon the mountains when the melting snows announce spring in Kashmir.

It is the way of the natural world, the way of the moon with a wave, the way of a maid with a man.

*1: Peasant girl
from the eastern United Provinces.
I found her among
a group of harvesters
on a late summer morning.*





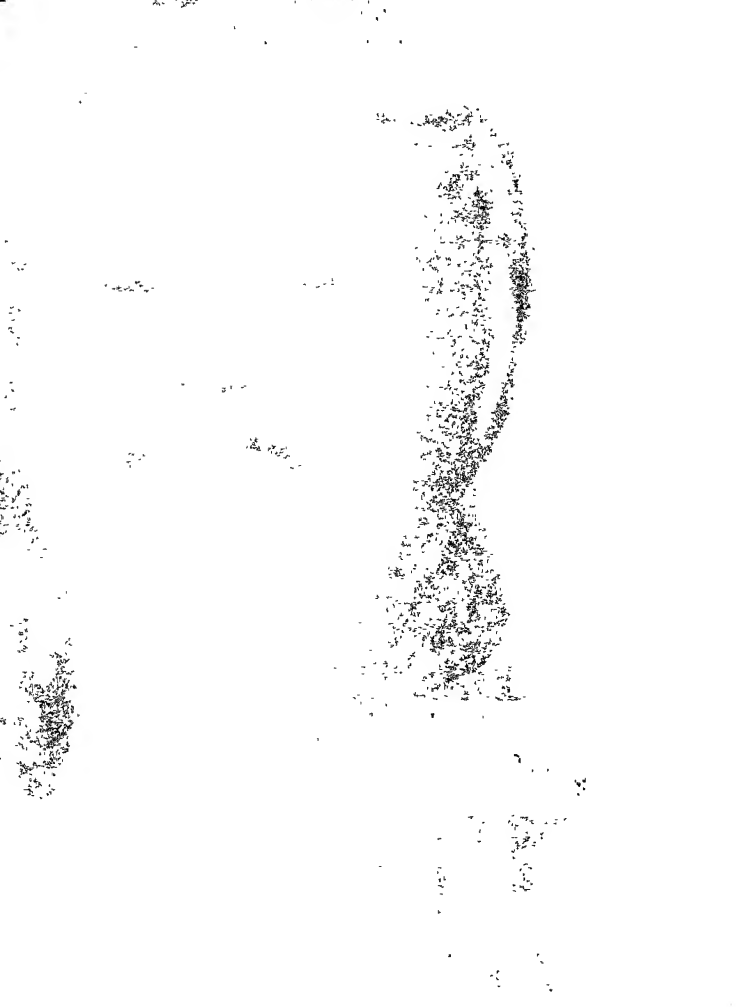
2: *Delhi textile worker.*

3: *Right: Lambadi gypsies in a train.*





4: Mikir tribal people from Assam.
*They were somewhat inaccessible
 but all the hills and valleys
 I had to cross seemed
 a small enough price
 for the gay company I found.*





5: *Girl from Edapal, Malabar.*
At the day's end
I saw a group of children
and this girl
coming down the road
carrying shells from the seashore
for four annas a day.
She was shy at the start.





6: Muslim peasant girl, United Provinces.



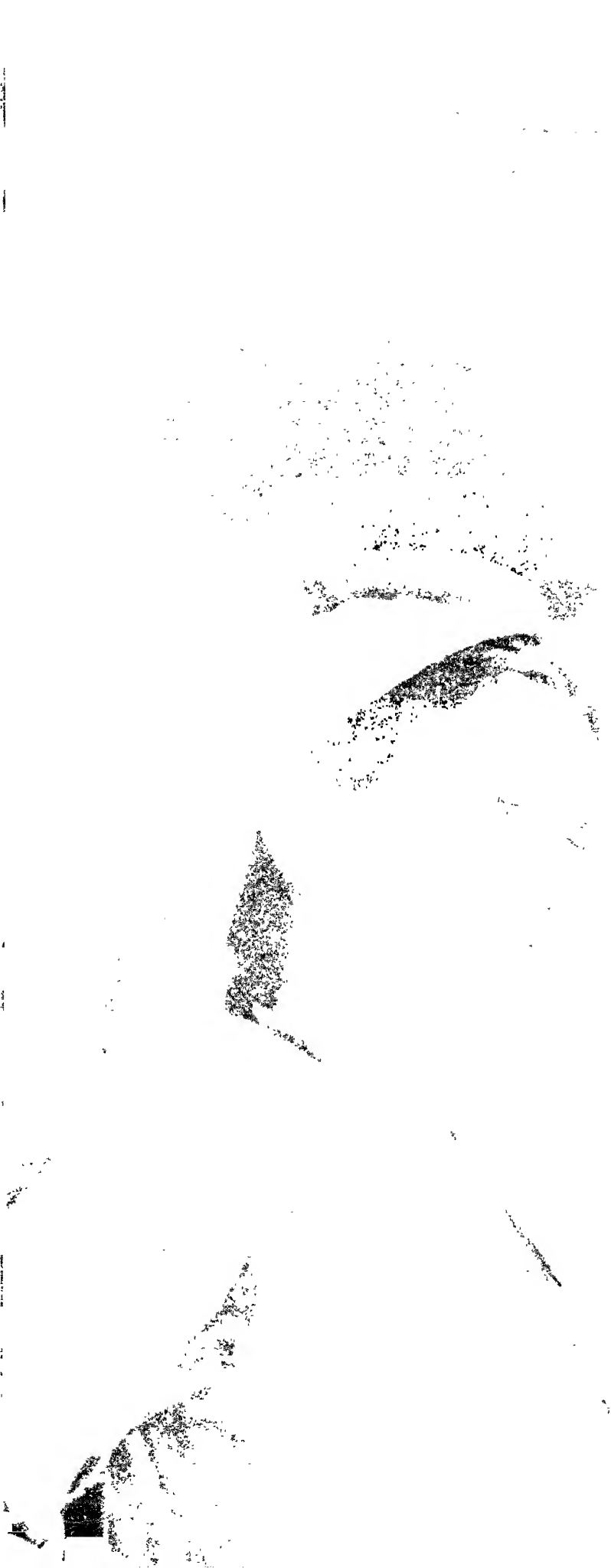
7. Worli peasant girl, Maharashtra tribe.





8: Left: Kashmiri girl with a water pot

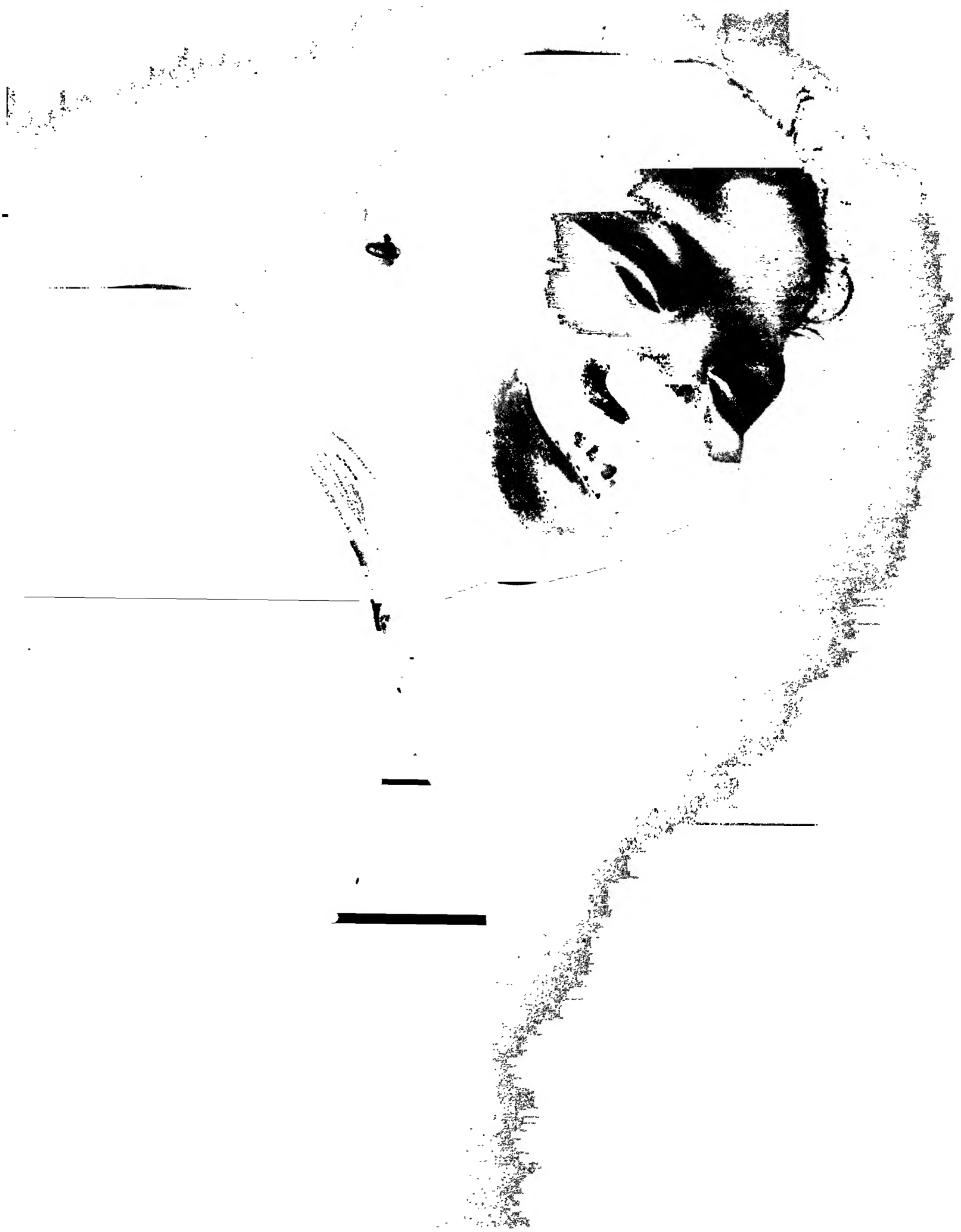
9: Above: Punjabi village shoemaker's daughter





10: Gypsies from the Frontier.
After a visit to Jamia-Milia
University on the outskirts of Delhi
I saw a group of handsome,
filthy, happy children and followed
them to a tattered camp.
The men were suspicious at first
but later allowed me to photograph
their women also.

*II: Garo girl from the borders
of Assam and Bengal.
She had come down from
the hills for the weekly haat.*



*12: Riot refugees in Comilla camp.
I saw this girl among the many
exhausted groups come from Noakhali.
I did not speak to her
but doubtless her story was
as all the others
a tale of bloodshed and burnt homes,
of the terror of being a girl
when men around go mad and
having only this fright in the stomach
to give strength for flight.*



13: 1 Mol. got from Assam





14: Rajput girl. Industrial worker in a Delhi slum

15: Rajput girl. Industrial worker in a Delhi slum





16: Mopla peasant girl. She was a little shy at the start. She had a flower in her hand. I suggested she put it in her hair. She did so and broke into laughter.

17: Right: Sikh girl from Punjab.



18: Peasant girl from Edappal, Malabar.
She walked so proudly and
upon my suggestion
easily assumed this attitude,
still and erect with upward eyes.
I took this photograph from
a low angle to
emphasize her character.



19: Girl from Malapparam, Malabar.
She was not at all shy and
fully felt the importance of her beauty,
standing in the middle of an
admiring circle with a man from
the city apparently come all
the many miles to immortalize her.



20: Kashmiri girl from the Lolab valley

21: Right: Gujarati fisher girl. I was with Margaret Bourke-White, the 'Life' photographer. We found this girl in the market place and we both took several shots of her.





22: *Worh tribal girl, Mahar.*

23: *Peasant girls from Busti, United Provinces.*





24: Bengali Muslim
jute worker's daughter.





25: Garo girl from a very primitive tribe
far into the hills of Assam.



26: Gujarati fisher folk.

I took a number of photographs unknown to them; they were watching Margaret Bourke-White at work. The young girl was particularly striking.





27: Nepali girl from Kalimpong.



28: *Bombay working class housewife.*

29: *Workers on a collective farm
in Kanan Kayal, Malabar.
The fields lay waste for want of water.
The peasants organised themselves
and pumped water to the place;
they worked together with great joy,
shared the sweat and the
rewarding harvest and gave no
grain to fatten an idle rentier.
I am reminded of the Song for the
Spanish Anarchists by Herbert Read:
Fifty men own the lemon grove
and no man is a slave.*





30. Mysore mother and child.
The many grain pots were empty.

31. Right: Grandmother and grandchild
in a relief centre during the famine
of 1944. They had just received
new clothes and waited upon
a promise of milk.





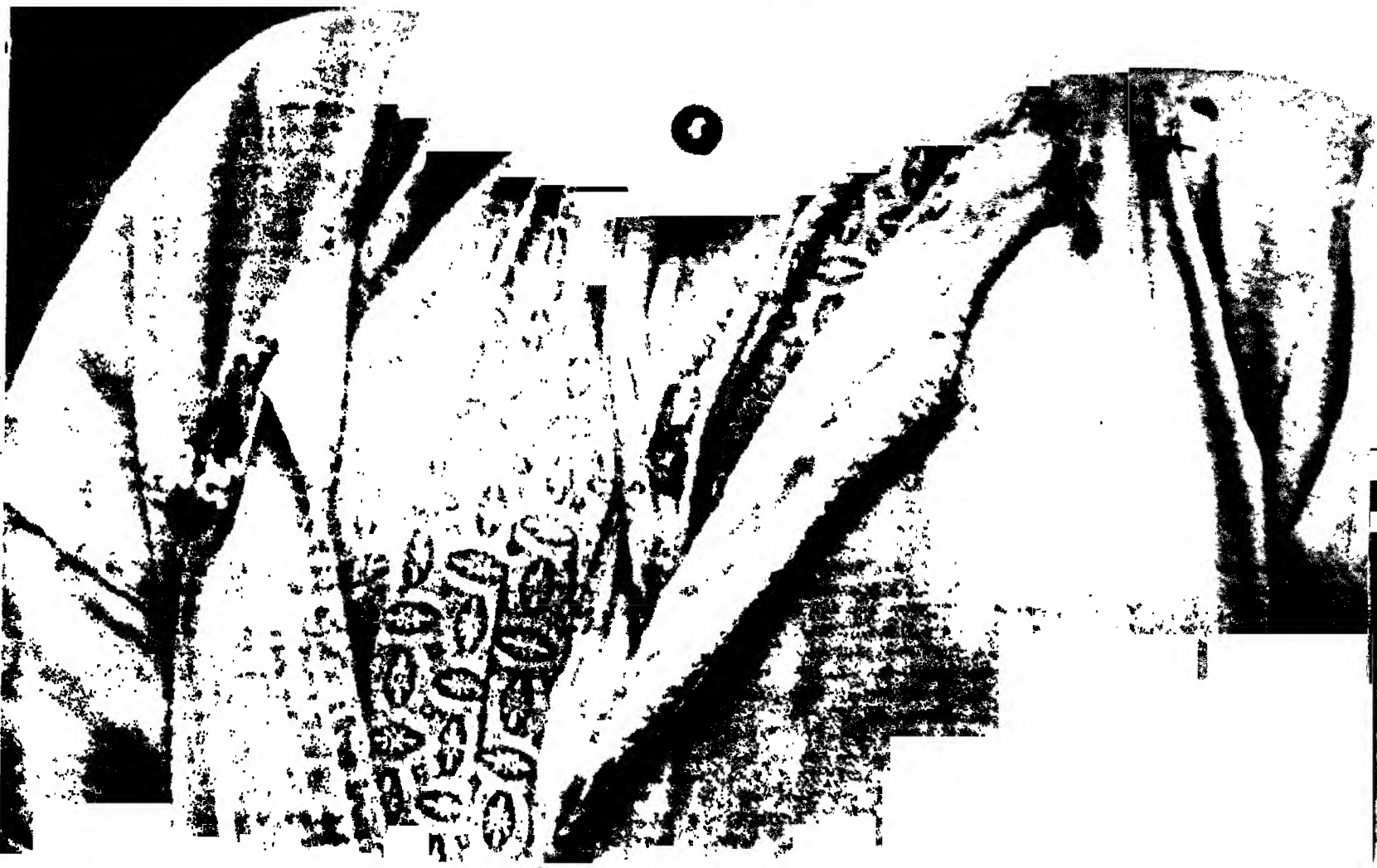
32: Hajang girl, Mymensingh district.

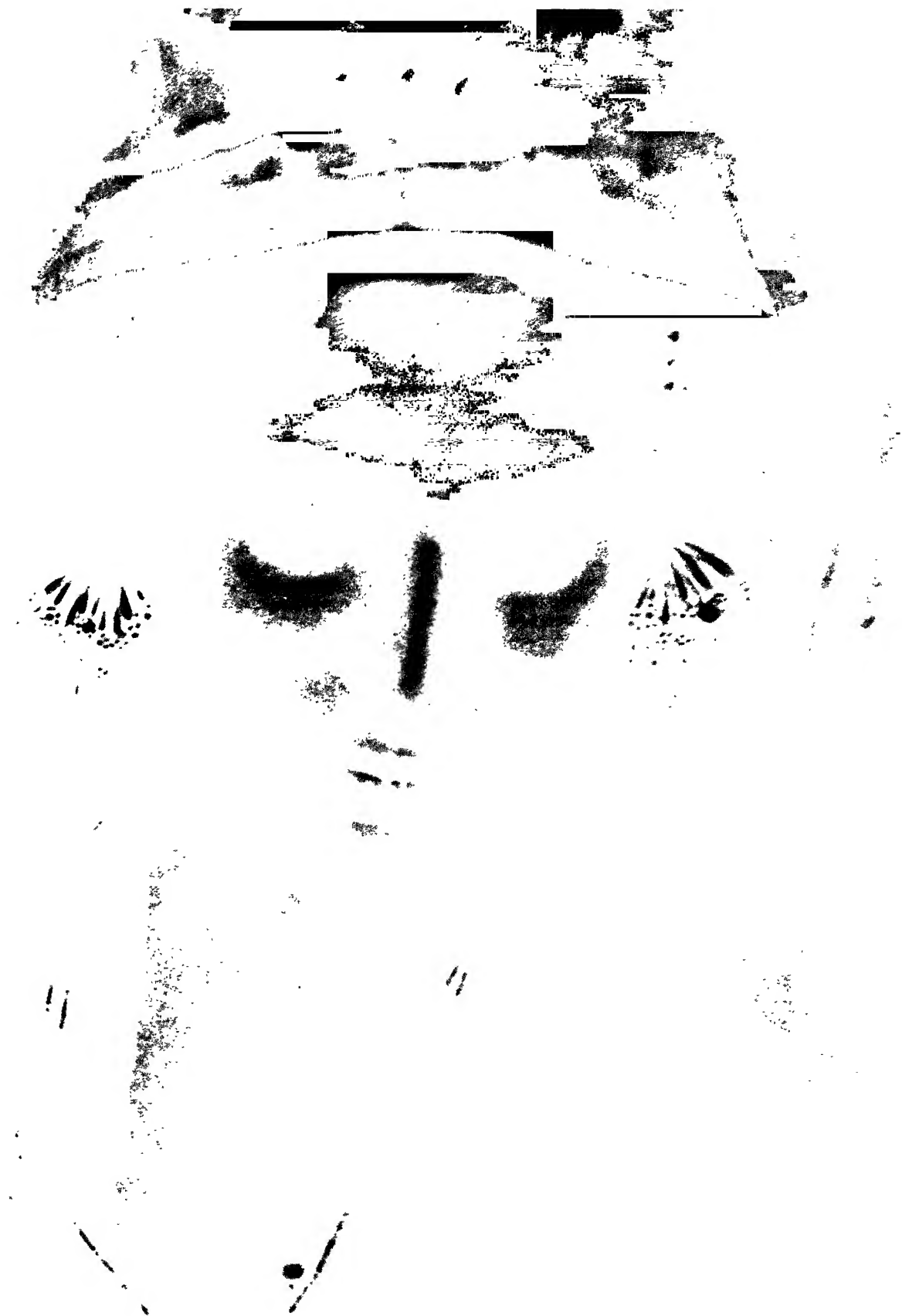
33: Right: Worli girl, Maharashtra Tribe.



34 *Kashmiri peasant from a village
near Handwara town.*

*I remember many sunflowers
and the quickly fading
evening light on the harvest fields . . .*







35: Left: Peasant girl from Lolab Valley, Kashmir. 36: Above: Kachari tribal girl, Assam.

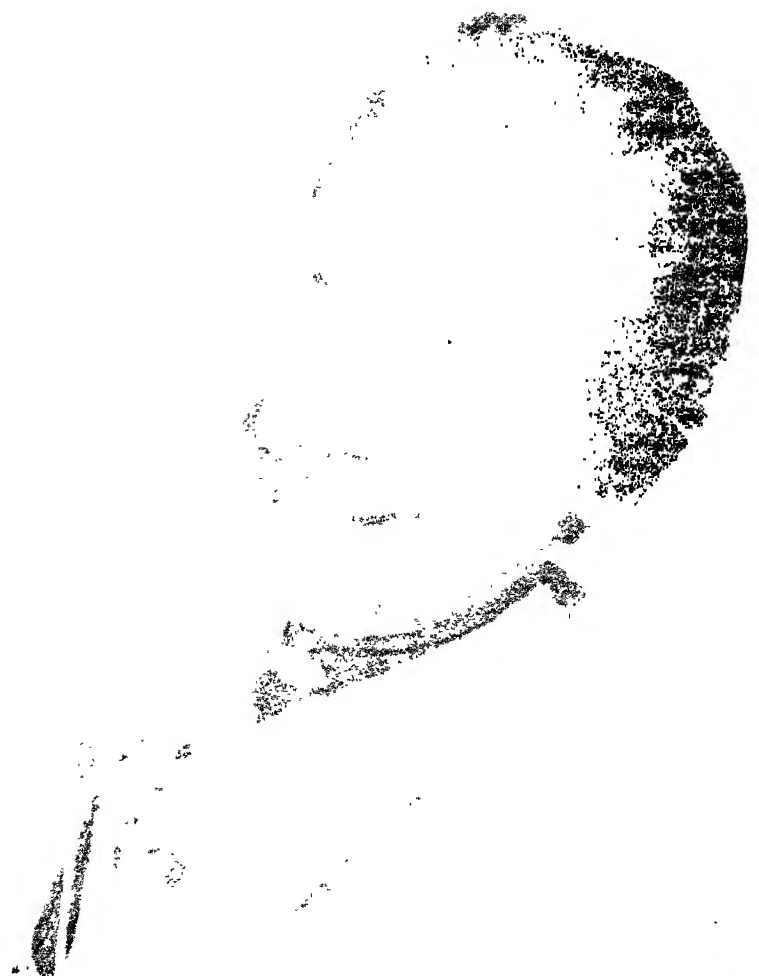


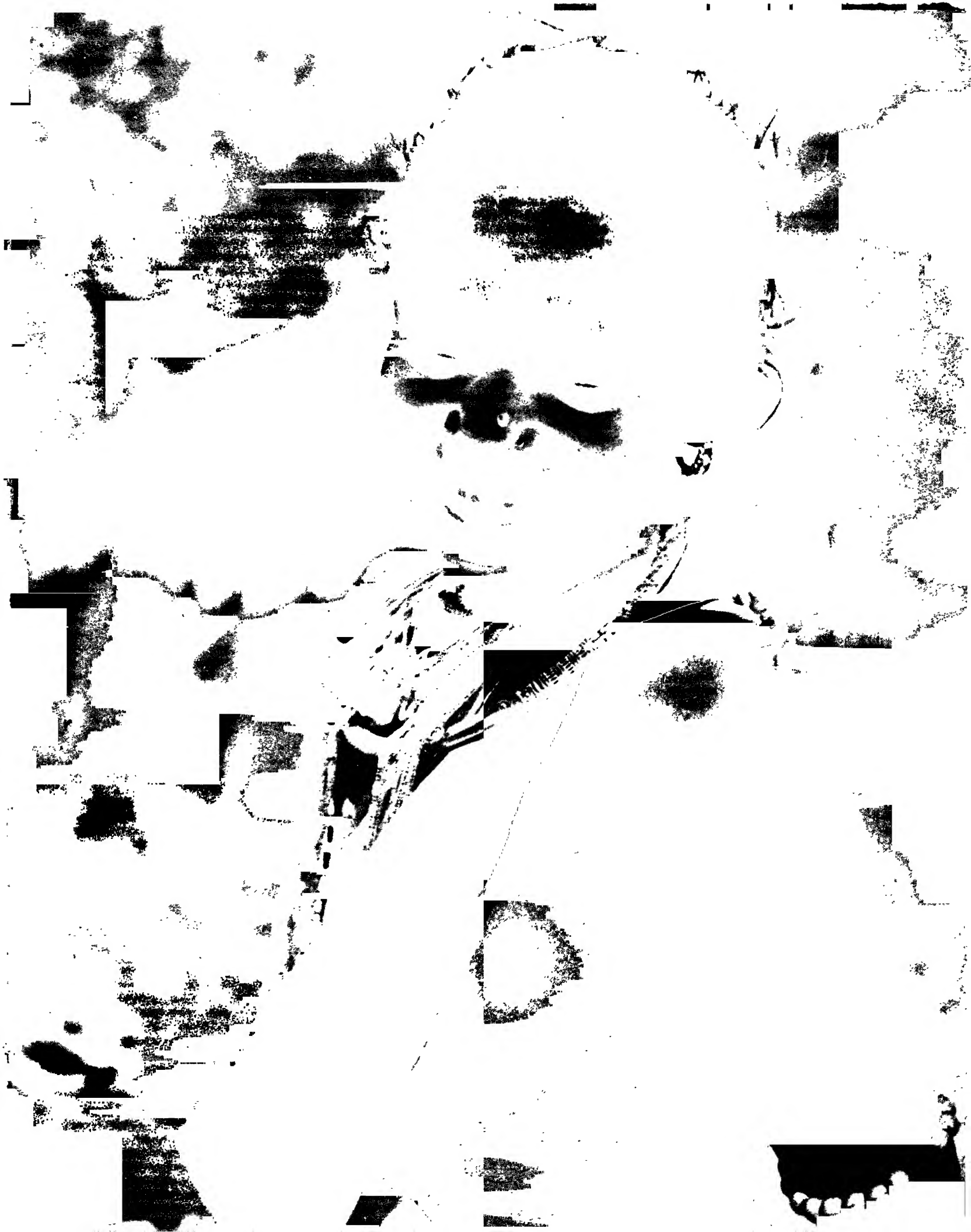
57: Fisher girls
from Khattakwada
in the market place
and on the shore.





58: Santal girl, Bihar.
*She came carrying these logs
 but was very ready to
 put them down and be
 photographed. I felt from
 the interest in her and
 the approval I got from
 the crowd that soon gathered
 that she was a favourite
 in the village, which was
 easily understandable.*





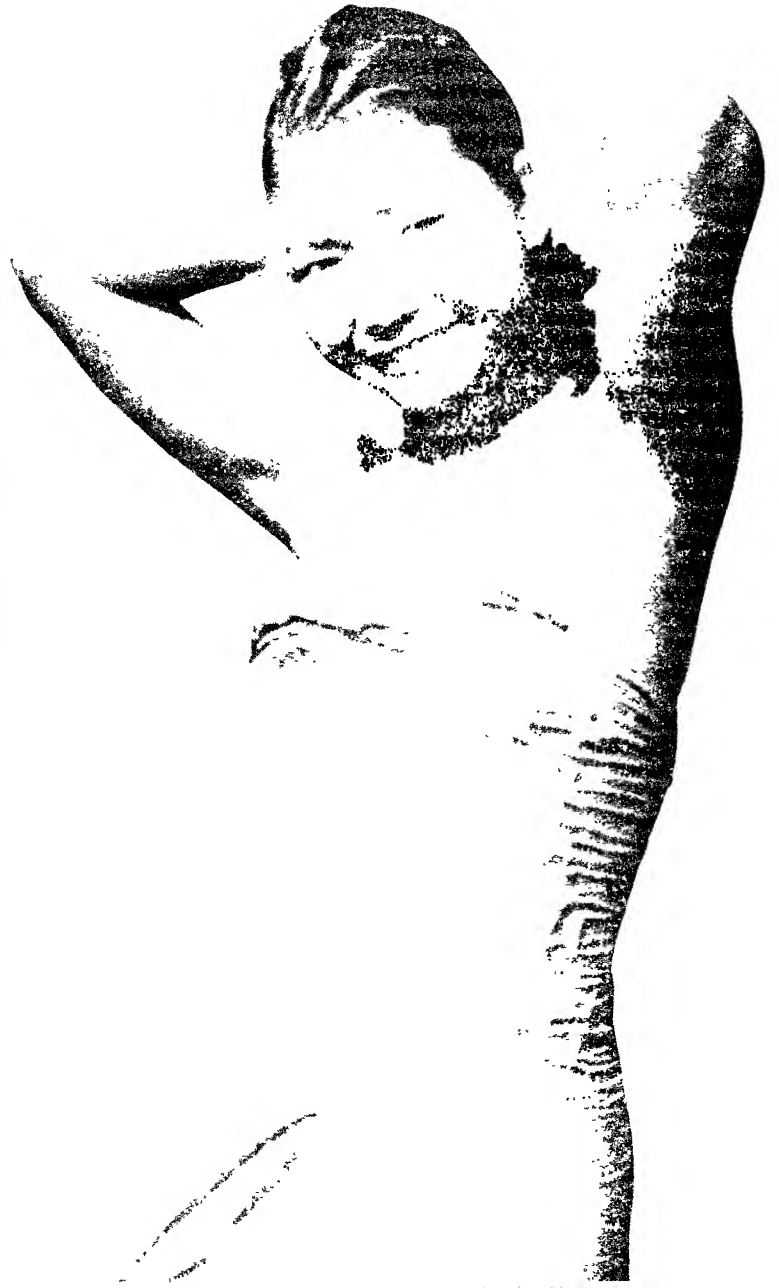


59: Santal mother and child.



10: Santal girl and child, Bihar.





41: Hapang girls bathing in Somesan river.
They were somewhat embarrassed by
my coming but a little eleven-year
old boy with me bossed them into behaving
more naturally; in a little while they
laughed again and took up
the play that I had interrupted.

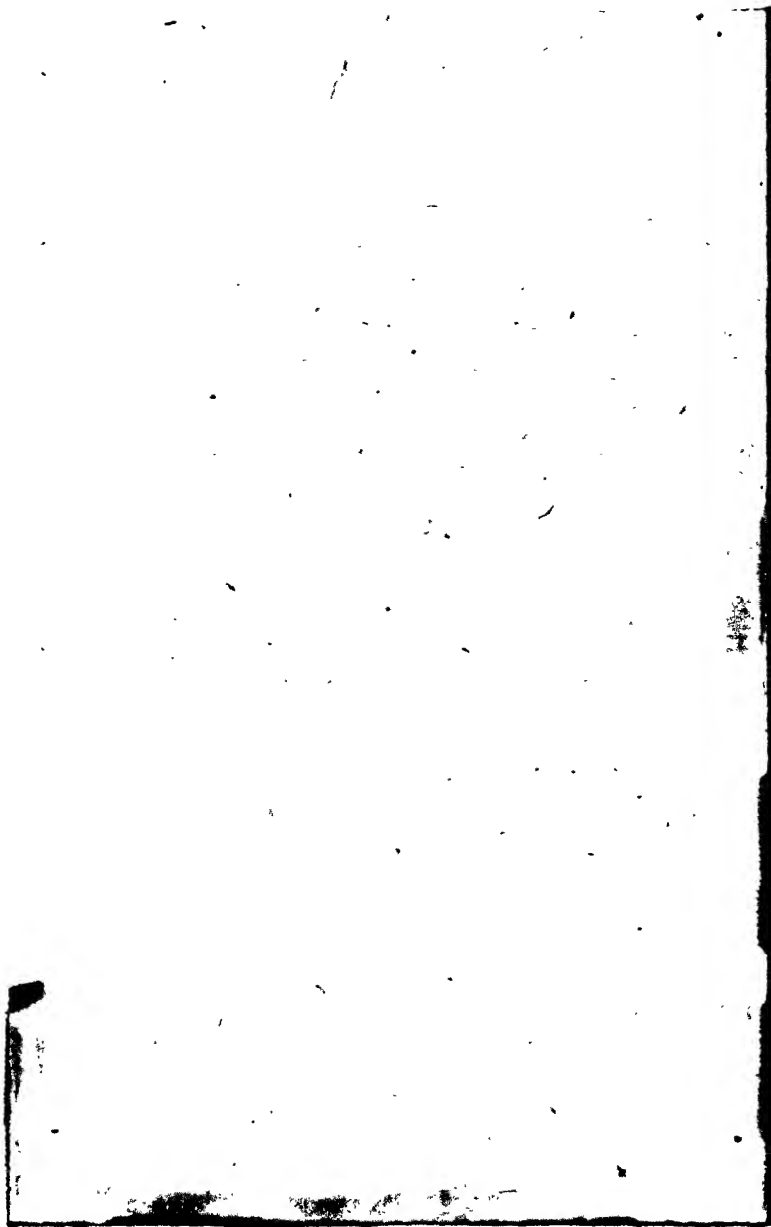


42: *Peasant girl from Malabar.*



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Pl.

